HARAMBEE FLAME!

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HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

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HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

CREED

Together we seek to know that which is us, to expand our collective consciousness of who we are and whence we come. We exalt in the fact that Afrikans are beautiful in our own right rather than at the expense of any other ethnic group. And in the true spirit of the Swahili word, "harambee," we promote the idea that cultural exchange is germane to human growth.

EDITORIAL

There's a t.v. commercial out now for Phillips Milk of Magnesia. It features a middle-aged African couple, somewhere in the good old U.S. of A, sitting on their front porch. The man is reading a newspaper as the woman commences to telling us about her husband's problems with irregularity. Her husband interrupts her, obviously not feeling too comfortable about his wife putting his very private business on the street. But she continues, telling us that Milk of Magnesia effectively deals with her husband's problem. Finally, the husband turns toward his wife, saying, "you don't even know these people." Too late. His business has already been told.

Po' Raymond(the husband's name). Now damned near everybody in the U.S. is hip to his bowel problems. On the Joan Rivers show, a young African woman is pestered by Rivers about whether she's had herself some sex with Prince. Of course, she could tell nosey-ass Joan that whom she has or has not had sex with is a private affair. Instead, she beats around the bush, talking about how she and Prince are "good friends." Not so bad. Wilt Chamberlain has written his second book. He's on the NBC morning news show being interviewed by Bryant Gumbel. Bryant asks him about a passage in his book where he states that he's had sex with at least 20,000 women, approximately 1.5 women per day since he was fifteen years old. Wilt is clearly pleased that this "fact" is now in the public domain but attempts to put on an air of modesty. To go back to Raymond, Wilt, "you don't even know these people."

In the September edition of the FLAME, we talked about LaToya Jackson and her "revelations" about sexual abuse by her father. In this case, the issues were loyalty and money-grubbing opportunism. And there are countless cases we are aware of in which these issues would be applicable. But the issue brought to the front by the Milk of

Magnesia commercial, the Sister on Rivers' show, and Wilt's new book is one of personal dignity, or the lack of same. Increasingly, we are witnessing exhibitions by African people in this country of an utter lack of any sense of personal dignity, of any sense of understanding of what's private business and what can be told to strangers (often, to millions of t.v. viewers). It is not only a matter of the things these folks are saying, but how they're behaving.

How often, for example, do we see African women, particularly in the entertainment field, appearing on talk shows with short dresses or skirts, sitting with their legs gapped open or sitting with their legs crossed, showing thigh for days while tugging at their skirts or dresses as if they suddenly realize their garments are a bit on the short side. Haven't their mothers explained to them that, if they dress like street-walkers, they will be looked upon with the level of disrespect that street-walkers are commonly looked upon? Hasn't anybody told them that they live in a sexist society in which women who are seen as physically attractive are simultaneously viewed by men as meat?

We understand, of course, that the majority culture in this country has established a standard by which personal dignity is routinely cast aside, that we live in the time of the "inquiring minds wanting to know" in which any number of folks are ready to tell and/or to show and tell. But it isn't sufficient for us simply to be aware of the fact that Caucasian-produced and -oriented mass culture puts forward the models which most of us follow. Rather, we have to ask of ourselves the question of whether African people exhibiting a gross absence of any sense of dignity is a trend we can afford.

At a time when our communities' social fabric is often ripped damned near to shreds by, among other things, pathetic models of "black" "man"-

hood and "black" "woman"-hood--Clarence Thomas, Anita Hill, and others, can we afford to have a continuation of a situation in which African males and females routinely speak and act in a fashion that demeans themselves and African people generally? When an African performer, such as Luther Campbell of 2 Live Crew, addresses our women as if they were nothing but things for men to get sexual satisfaction from, he is acting without dignity and is assaulting the dignity of his people. At the same time, when those African females who perform with him, and those who spring from the audiences to join him on stage, act like mindless genitalia, and assorted other body parts; they are acting without dignity as well and, worse, are cooperating in their own devaluation, by Campbell and others, of their humanity. They are being slaves under the whip who ask the master for the whip so they can beat themselves. When Campbell and company act without dignity, they reinforce in the minds of our young one of the chief messages delivered by the institutions of racism, that "'niggers' are worthless, mindless."

When Colin Powell speaks flippantly about what what was, in fact, the slaughter of many thousands of retreating Iraqi soldiers, he is acting without dignity. And inasmuch as these Iraqi soldiers were people of color, commonly referred to as "sand niggers" by Caucasian U.S. troops, he is reinforcing the good ol' American idea that might makes right and that the lives of "niggers" are expendable in the employment of might. What difference is there between Colin Powell and an African gang-banger on America's urban streets?

When Arsenio Hall willingly and enthusiastically submits, in front of millions of viewers, to being a veritable lap-puppy for many of the Caucasian women who appear on his show, he is acting without dignity and is promoting the idea of the Caucasian woman as the desirable person and irresistable siren for African men. At a time of im-

mense shortage of African men in this country and of great strains in relationships between African men and African women, can we afford to have very visible African males degrading themselves in such a fashion and perpetuating the lie of "white" supremacy?

Raymond said, "we don't even know these people." But we do know these people and ought to know them and ourselves well enough to know that quite a lot of our business is none of theirs. We ought to know our situation well enough to understand that there are things that are inappropriate for us to say or do, things that, in this place and time, are destructive to us. But many of us fail to know and/or fail to understand because we've convinced ourselves, with considerable help from American mass culture, that this whole business is a joke, a kind of no-truth-and-no-consequences game in which we are entitled to do what we feel like doing, do it if it feels good, get paid, get over, etc.

And of course many of us have convinced ourselves that this whole business is some kind of joke because of our fear. If we rip away the illusions and look at the true seriousness of our situation, our expendability in this country, the historical record of America, the disaster running rampant in many of our communities, and so forth; we learn that we are in danger and, having been programmed to believe that we are powerless to successfully resist those who pose the greatest danger, we put the illusions back, with some serious quickness. Rather than face that which we believe we are incapable of dealing with, we stick with the game. We will quit playing it when the clutter of our losses blots out any remaining illusions.

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Continuing with this matter of dignity, we cannot call this edition of the HARAMBEE FLAME "complete" without making comment on the recent "tomahawk-chop" affair and renewed efforts by groups of this country's indigenous people to put a stop to the

(Cont. on page 14)

EDITORIAL POLICY

The HARAMBEE FLAME, the monthly publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization(parent chapter of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization, Inc.), is a pan-Africanist newsletter. The FLAME's priority, with respect to news and views, is African people, events and developments which affect us and are, or should be, of concern to us. The FLAME does not recognize any distinctions between African people based solely on place of birth. References in the FLAME to Africans are made on the basis of our common ancestry. An exception to this is the reprinting of articles, or excerpts thereof, from other publications, in which cases we do not alter "black" or other terms designating African people. This is our practice because we do not wish to diminish the integrity and authenticity of the articles we excerpt from.

Articles contained in the FLAME do not necessarily represent the official positions of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization unless they are accompanied by a statement identifying the views as those of the organization. Generally speaking, all unsigned articles are by the editor, Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa(p.k.a. D. Rice).

We encourage you to submit articles to the FLAME. Please enclose with your submission a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Articles should not exceed 1200 words, though longer pieces will not be automatically rejected. Short stories are subject to the same restriction with respect to length. We also welcome poetry and graphics. We are looking for poems which address African folks' lives, the conditions we face, and our struggles to rise above those things which hinder us. Submitted poems should not sacrifice power and beauty for the sake of uniform rhythm and/or rhyme. Send submissions to the editor c/o HARAMBEE FLAME; P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, NE; 68542-2500.

FROM OTHER SOURCES

Pan-African Organization Graduates Priests

"About 10 years ago, a group of African-Americans decided to begin training as priests and priestesses in the ancient Khamit(Egyptian) tradition of their ancestors..

"...the Ausar Auset Society, a Brooklyn-based Pan-African organization, with members in 11 cities, recognizes the existence of priests and priestesses trained in ancient Khamitian meditation techniques, including the healing and divination arts...

"These priests, who have been challenged to improve their spiritual character through following health and nutrition regimens, and the study of ancient Black cultures, history and philosophy, has been called upon to serve the Black community in matters of health, family counseling and meditation...

"The Shekhem Ur Shekhem, which literally means King of Kings, returns from Nigeria this week, after meetings with the Oni of Ife, traditional King of the Yorubas, the Emir of Kano and other spiritual leaders...

"The (graduation)ceremony will be high-lighted by a ritual dance(mudram) presentation by the priesthood graduates, that will invoke the deities and ancestors, called Shepsu, for blessings for members of the African diaspora.

"As members of the Ausar Auset Society, the priests have offered free classes, over the past 14 years, to encourage Blacks in America to achieve their greatest spiritual potential and economic and cultural independence..."

-from "First Graduation Ceremony For Ancient Egyptian Priesthood," page 28, Oct. 5 THE N.Y. AMSTERDAM NEWS(N.Y., N.Y.)

Since The Attica Uprising ...

"The charges of brutality and racism being made today... are similar to those made before the explosion at Attica. The changes that have occurred since then, such as hiring more Black and Latino guards, seem to have had little effect on the racist attitudes and actions of many of the white guards.

"Perhaps even more troubling...are legislative actions designed more to appease constiuents fearful of crime than to contribute to a fairer criminal-justice system.

"When the inmate population had a much higher percentage of whites serving long indeterminate sentences than it now does, the granting of so-called 'good time'(earned incentive allowance) meant an inmate's sentence could be reduced in return for good behavior...

"As Blacks and Latinos became the majority of those serving life terms, the corrections law quietly was changed to eliminate those provisions. The granting of good time for all inmates, however long or short their sentences, now has become a matter officials can decide solely on their personal feelings about an inmate...

"Assemblyman Arthur O. Eve of Buffalo and others introduced a bill in January to restore good-time provisions for all prison inmates, and guarantee due process in granting or denying such time. The bill was never called out of committee, however, and sponsors are working now to try to pass it in this session...

"The prisons(in New York) also have become a good growth industry for white, upstate communities. From 1979 to 1988, although the crime rate increased by only 2 percent, the number of prisoners doubled. And while the prison population 'only' doubled, the number of civilian employees--mostly

guards--rose tenfold...

"Several months ago, a group of inmates at Great Meadows Correctional Facility petitioned state officials to investigate systematic beatings and racially motivated violence by guards against Blacks and Latinos...

"Within 30 days, six of the original eight signers of the petition had been transferred to other prisons..."

-from "State Prisons: Few Lessons Learned Since Attica," pages 5 and 33, Oct. 2-8 THE CITY SUN (Brooklyn, N.Y.)

Second AIDS Drug Comes Out Of Africa

"An effective treatment for AIDS has been developed and is available in this East African capitol (Nairobi, Kenya). In fact two such treatments now exist.

"Both derived basically from the same research, but marketed by two different bodies under different names...

"Kemron, developed by the Kenyan Medical Research Institute(KEMRI) under the direction of Dr. Davy Koech, 41, and assisted by clinician Prof. Arthur Obel, was first announced on...July 25, 1990...

"Immunex, the second of the two treatments, both containing human alpha interferon, was launched by a Nairobi-based company, Medikem, whose principals claim they had trouble obtaining KEMRON to sell to customers, so they developed their own version...

"Dr. Koech...revealed that some of the 795 patients in the first clinical testing had actually 'sero-converted', which meant they not only were relieved of all symptoms of AIDS, but no longer had the virus itself...

"The cost of the alpha-interferon treatments is also a milestone in the fight against HIV. AZT treatment for one year can cost a patient between $7,000 and $10,000. Kemron and Immunex treatment in contrast would cost between $1,000 and $1,600 for one year...

"Hayashibara manufactured the first batch of 200,000 tablets in Japan. However, because the tablets were a final product, the Japanese Ministry of Health allowed them to be exported to Kenya only with the stipulation that the Kenyan Ministry of Health assured that the treatment would be confined to Kenya..."

"Dr. Koech said that the problems surrounding availability of Kemron will be resolved by the end of the year when Kemron production will be based at KEMRI rather than in Japan where it currently is produced..."

-from "'Miracle' Drugs Relieve AIDS Symptoms," pages 3 and 32 and "Controversy Surrounds Kemron Development," pages 3 and 34, Oct. 7 THE FINAL CALL(Chicago, ILL)

Note of explanation: The Japanese company, Hayashibara, according to the articles from which this material is excerpted, is producing the Kemron tablets because of the absence of a tablet-production facility with sufficient bulk-manufacture capacity in Kenya. Such a facility is to be in operation by the end of the year. The stipulation imposed upon the Kenyan Ministry of Health by the Japanese Ministry of Health that Kemron tablets made in Japan not be used outside of Kenya is reportedly, according to the articles, due to Japanese government's and Hayashibara's concerns relative to product liability.

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Haiti's Deposed Aristide: The Africa Connection

"...Ben Dupuy, Haiti's ambassador-at-large, told over 200 supporters at P.S. 167(in Brooklyn's Crown Heights section) that...Fr. Aristide had sent him last month to meet the president of Benin(formerly Dahomey) and other African heads of state to develop relations with Africans for the first time in Haiti's modern history. 'It was part of my mission to deal with the president of Benin because it is a shame for Haiti, which has diplomatic relations with most industrial countries but does not have a diplomat in Africa'.

..."Benin is where most Haitians were transported from from, Dupuy asserted. Therefore, he said, Haitians and Africans plan to retrace the journey from West Africa to the island of Hispaniola, which Haiti shares with the Dominican Republic. President Aristide is said to represent a kind of pride and African consciousness never displayed by any of his unelected predecessors..."

-from "Haiti's Masses Await Aristide's Return, Says Ambassador," page 9, Oct. 12 N.Y. AMSTERDAM NEWS

Zaire: Is Mobutu On The Way Out?

"...With pressure mounting after an outbreak of looting in Kinshasa, the capital, and other parts of the country, Mobutu agreed at the beginning of the week to the appointment of a transitional government headed by opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi wa Mulumba...

"In addition, some 1,500 French and Belgian paratroopers arrived and evacuated most Europeans and Americans from the country as Western governments stepped up calls for Mobutu to yield power to an opposition-led cabinet...

"Since agreeing to name Tshisekedi prime minister,

the president has indicated real reluctance to give up any of the authority he enjoyed during 26 years of autocratic rule...

But Mobutu appeared to have few options. Belgium, France and the United States, Zaire's major benefactors and trade partners, signaled growing--if belated--impatience with his resistance to change. The United States announced it was cutting off aid last month, about the time Zaire was suspended from the International Monetary Fund for nonpayment of debts..

"Meanwhile, opposition efforts to oust Mobutu have escalated. Tshisekedi has demonstrated widespread popular support, while Mobutu is broadly believed to have earned the enmity of most of his subjects.

..."Once a Mobutu ally and cabinet minister, Tshisekedi--a lawyer from the central region of the country who spent nine years in prison and several more in exile--is a leader of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress, one of the largest opposition groups in the 150-member Sacred Union coalition, which is pressing for Mobutu's ouster. ..."

-from "Unrest In Zaire Wobbles Mobutu Regime," page 17, Oct. 16 THE GUARDIAN(N.Y., N.Y.)

Old Song Leads To Discovery Of African Ties

"To Mary Moran, it was just one of many lulabys she sang to her 13 children as they grew up near this south Georgia town(Darien)...

"Joe Opala, who studies the Gullahs (and) has taught at the University of Sierra Leone in Freetown for 12 years, traced a group of Gullah descendents in Georgia and last year helped arrange a reception for the Georgians in Sierra Leone. He wanted to play some authentic music at the reception, and stumbled onto Ms. Moran's song.

"'I contacted a musicologist friend of mine. She gave me an old, scratchy recording that a researcher had made in the '30s', Opala said. 'Apparently, he had traveled down to Georgia, met a Gullah woman called Amelia Dawley, and asked her to record the songs she grew up with.

"'The songs were African, but we didn't know which language she was singing and she did not know the meaning of the words...The songs had simply been passed down within her family for generations as a kind of heirloom'.

"But Opala did recognize enough of the language to connect it to the Mende region of Sierra Leone, in the southern part of the nation. So he traveled to remote Mende villages and played the recording...

"'When we played the recording...the people in the village...understood all the words except one'...

"The song turned out to be an ancient funeral song written long before Christianity.

"'The Mende song the Morans have passed down is probably the longest intelligible African text ever preserved by an African-American family in the U.S. and it is clearly from this country', Opala wrote to Momoh, the Sierra Leone president...

"In July, the president invited Ms. Moran and her children to visit Sierra Leone..."

-from "Mysterious Ancient Song Ties Georgian Gullahs To Sierra," page 11, Oct. 12-18 THE ATLANTA VOICE

PERIODICALS

The following is a listing of some of the publications we frequently or occasionally use as sources for our "From Other Sources" feature.

THE GUARDIAN
33 W. 17th St.
N.Y., N.Y. 10011

N.Y. AMSTERDAM NEWS
2340 Frederick Douglas Blvd.
N.Y., N.Y. 10027

THE FINAL CALL
734 W. 79th St.
Chicago, ILL 60620

THE CITY SUN
GPO Box 560
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11202

IN THESE TIMES
2040 No. Milwaukee
Chicago, ILL 60647

ARM THE MASSES
28 Vesey St., Suite 2298
N.Y., N.Y. 10007

THE ATLANTA VOICE
633 Pryor St., S.W.
Atlanta, GA 30312

THE MILWAUKEE COURIER
2431 W. Hopkins
Milwaukee, WI 53206

Other publications you might find to be of interest:

THE BLACK COLLEGIAN
1240 So. Broad St.
New Orleans, LA
70125

NIGERIA HOMENEWS
173 Kilburn High Road
London NW6 7HY
England

NOMMO
112C Kerckhoff Hall
308 Westwood Plaza
Los Angeles, CA
90024

Black Panther News
P.O. Box 519
Berkeley, CA 94701-519

THE BLACK SCHOLAR
P.O. Box 2869
Oakland, CA 94609

THE ATLANTA VOICE
633 Pryor St., S.W.
Atlanta, GA 30312

THE THIRD EYE
P.O. Box 80435
Nashville, TN. 37208

use by school and professional athletic teams of "Indian" names and mascots. As a people who have been subjected to Caucasians' trivializing of us through their creation of Aunt Jemima, Little Black Sambo, Amos And Andy, etc., we Africans in the U.S. should have no difficulty understanding indigenous people's objections to the Atlanta baseball team's use of the "Braves" name, its fans' employment of the "tomahawk chop," and other acts of assault upon their dignity.

If we need help acquiring such an understanding, let us suppose this year's World Series had been played between the Minnesota Twins and the Atlanta Negroes. Fulton Stadium in Atlanta. There are several thousand Caucasian fans, some of whom are in black-face, nearly all of them doing something they call the "chitlin wave," using these rubber hog guts. Whenever there's a big play, they try to sing spirituals. Would we be fire-hyped, or what? We would feel that the loss of upwards of fifty million of our foreparents during the Middle Passage(through starvation, disease, and suicides aboard slave-ships; beatings, whippings, lynchings, etc. on plantations; and other forms of barbarism enacted by the foreparents of these Atlanta Negroes fans) was more than enough hurt fro us, that we didn't need any insult on top of genocidal injury.

Like ourselves, this country's indigenous people have suffered much. Some estimates place the numbers of these people in what is now the United States at as high as ten million at the time of the various 16th-century "discoveries" of America but as low as under 250,000 by the time of the 1890 census. In other words, this country's "Indians"(called such by Columbus, Cabot, and other European "explorers" because they mistakenly believed they had reached Asian shores) were almost totally annihilated.

But the fact that we Africans in the U.S. and the U.S. indigenous population have suffered a common

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BACK IN TIME

Miles had a demeanor about him that we liked. He was serious, he was "clean," and he could play. He was one of our priests from that beginning. He was one of the sound scientists who had ushered in the new learning of Bebop from the Black laboratories of Minton's and the all night jam sessions that rescued Black expression from the grim mediocrity of commercial big band chartism the corporate media sacrilegiously called "swing." Like Bird, and Monk and Max, and Klook, and Dizzy in the first rank, Miles was a young master, a young prince, whose very demeanor and voice was the essence of what was hip.

And this must be understood, that Miles Davis was what hip meant! Bird was God and Dizzy his frantic herald. Monk was the High Priest of weird(though Monk's weirdness was the measure of all things for me personally) but Miles was hip. He looked hip. He looked hip, he dressed hip, he talked hip, and he played...shit, he was what hip sounded like.

So from the beginning, Miles was also cool. He carried that with him a direct gift from the President of what it is. And we valued that, that coolness, that refusal to be committed to any of this workaday dumbness we grew up in the middle of. If the world of white supremacy, mediocrity and useless effort were square(the angle of pain and failure according to the ancient Egyptians) then the pyramid of our constancy was to be cool.

But it was always a coolness like the Congolese described, a fire hotter than heat. A fire too serious to use up its being with being hot. Its hotness was in its self-defined expression, if you looked at it it might seem like dancing blue ice, edged with reds and yellows barely, but a cold blue, except when you touched, it was extremely hot. So its speech could burn the world down, could burn you down if you stumbled into it, like some abusive geometry. ...

-by Amiri Baraka, from Sept. '91

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Fifth Annual International Black Dance Companies Conference will be held January 23-26, 1992 at the Los Angeles Hyatt Regency Hotel. Events will include showcasing, dinner, panels, etc. For more information, contact L. Washington; 5179½ W. Adams Blvd.; Los Angeles, CA; 90016.

The Ninth National Festival of Black Storytelling will be held November 14-17, 1991 in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina and the surrounding area of Horry and Georgetown counties. "In the Tradition" storytellers are invited to perform. For more information, write P.O. Box 2554; Myrtle Beach, South Carolina; 29578. Or phone Festival Director Beulah Priest-White at (803) 237-3459.

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holocaust is not the only reason that we should understand their objection to the assault upon their dignity represented by the "tomahawk chop" and so forth. When our foreparents escaped the slave plantations of Florida, it was the Seminoles who gave us refuge. The Cherokee, Cree, and other nations of indigenous people often claimed us as slaves in order to protect us from the long arm of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, while, in fact, treating us as welcome guests. The instances and forms of indigenous people giving us refuge and protection were innumerable. And we commonly reciprocated by taking up arms and fighting alongside the various nations of indigenous people against our mutual oppressor. We fought alongside the Seminoles in the nearly forty years of the Seminole Wars, alongside the Comanche in Texas, alongside the Tuscaruros in Virginia.

And not only were we commonly befriended by indigenous people and not only did we frequently do battle on their side. But many of us have their blood in our veings and many of them have ours. In a real sense, these people are our cousins.

-Editor

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